

Building Blocks

A PUBLICATION OF THE CALIFORNIA CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION Vol. 2, Issue 1

CALIFORNIA
**CHILDREN
& FAMILIES**
COMMISSION



A LETTER FROM ROB REINER Chair, California Children and Families Commission

Dear Colleague,

The year 2001 ended on a tragic note for our nation, and many have said that our world has changed irreparably. Our work on behalf of children, aiming to ensure they grow up in safe and healthy environments, seems even more important today than it did six months ago. And there is much to be encouraged about. Research has confirmed the critical importance of the early years and supports that quality health and education programs ensure our children grow up healthy, learning and ready to reach their full potential.

Neurons to Neighborhoods, a landmark publication sponsored by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, represents the first time we can find—in one place—much of the peer-reviewed science relating to early childhood development. This publication synthesizes the rigorous research conducted in the child development and health field over the last 50 years.

Neurons to Neighborhoods is generally regarded as the definitive resource on the scientific research conducted on behalf of children. It provides a basis for the growing movement advocating the integration of early childhood care and education into our established educational and health and social services systems. It is probably not a surprise to those who have dedicated their lives to children's issues that *Neurons to Neighborhoods* reports that consistent, predictable, nurturing and enriching experiences for babies and young children have a profound impact on how their brains organize and their course of development. The authors state that: "From the time of conception to the first day of kindergarten, development proceeds at a pace exceeding that of any subsequent stage of life...From birth to age 5, children rapidly develop foundational capabilities on which subsequent development builds."

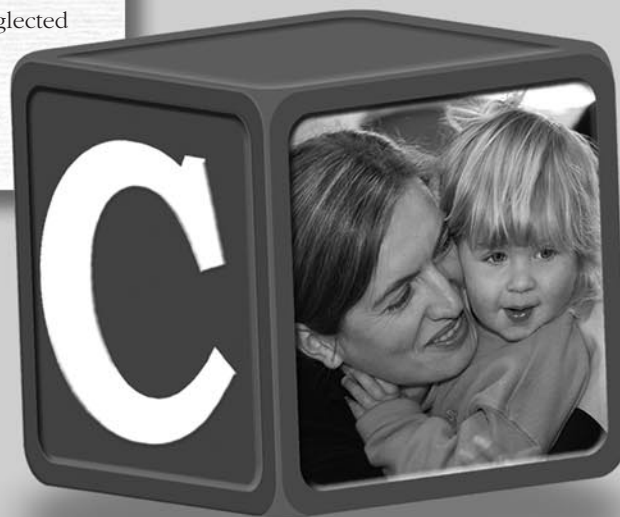
This issue of *Building Blocks* contains an article highlighting some of the important conclusions the authors of *Neurons to Neighborhoods* have drawn and how these ideas have influenced the work of the State Commission and the 58 County Children and Families Commissions.

In California, ample data exist that show too many of our kids suffering from disadvantages that stymie healthy development. According to a recent report released by Children Now, 1.7 million of California's kids live in families that are poor, 1.85 million children lack health insurance and more than 660,000 children were reported abused or neglected last year.

continued
on page 10

IN THIS ISSUE:

- A Letter from Rob Reiner, Chair 1
- New Research on Readiness Offers Strong Foundation for Prop. 10 Agenda 2
- Public Education Campaign for Parents and Caregivers 6
- Child Care Incentive Programs Tackle Compensation to Spur Growth in the Field 8
- Key Study Confirms Lasting Benefits from Early Childhood Education 9
- Prop. 10 - Facts at a Glance 11



New Research on Readiness Offers Strong Foundation for Prop. 10 Agenda

As participants in Prop. 10 work to ensure that children in California enter kindergarten healthy, learning and ready to reach their full potential, recently published research provides added confirmation and direction for our work. In this issue of Building Blocks we look at groundbreaking research showing the lasting benefits of extended early intervention for young children (page 9), and a historic synthesis of the scientific findings on early childhood development sponsored by the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences (below).

National Research Council and Institute of Medicine Lay Out Definitive Findings in Early Childhood Science

As outlined in the Summer 2001 issue of *Building Blocks*, State and County Prop. 10 Commissions have undertaken an ambitious agenda on behalf of our youngest Californians, including a major new School Readiness Initiative, outreach and education programs for new parents, new professional development and retention strategies for early childhood educators, statewide and local media campaigns, new health initiatives, and more. State policymakers are now working to incorporate an early childhood readiness component into the state's first pre-K through university Master Plan for Education. The goal of this work is to ensure that all our children receive the early care and nurturing they need to thrive physically,

emotionally and intellectually so that they arrive in kindergarten as young learners who will do well in the crucial early years of school.

Because of the high stakes for our children and the significant investments needed to reach this goal, "getting it right" by making sure that our work has a strong basis in research is an essential principle of Prop. 10. A growing number of studies on brain development and other aspects of early life have underscored the importance of the earliest years, while the best-known longitudinal study of the benefits of early childhood education, the High/Scope Perry Preschool Study,¹ has shown impressive lasting results for children who participated in a specific high-quality preschool program. Collectively, these findings have provided an initial basis for moving forward. But while these findings have vali-

dated our general direction, until recently a lack of synthesis across a limited field of research has made it difficult for practitioners and policymakers to develop the sophisticated multi-disciplinary understanding of child development needed to address the complex and diverse needs of young children in California.

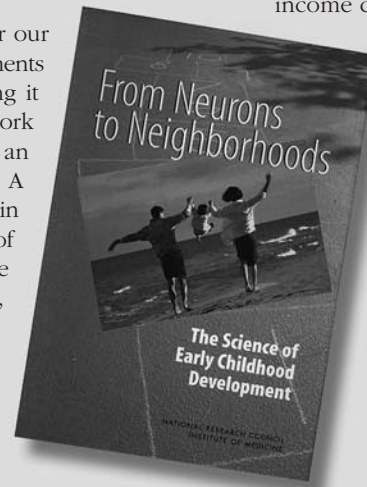
In the past 18 months, however, scientists and evaluators have published findings that represent a major leap forward in our understanding of how young children grow, what

they need, and what works to help them. By documenting the effectiveness of comprehensive, extended intervention for low-income children ages 3 to 9 in the Chicago public schools, a recent study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (described in our article on p. 9) has shown for the first time that large-scale public interventions can produce lasting benefits for the lowest income children.

And in a landmark volume published by the National Academy of Sciences entitled *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*,² an interdisciplinary committee of national and international experts has integrated the findings of more than 50 years' research and hundreds of peer-reviewed studies on child development to provide a comprehensive view of all aspects of early life, from infant neurobiology to the effects of neighborhood economics on young children. Asked to "update scientific knowledge about the nature of early development and the role of early experiences, to disentangle such knowledge from erroneous popular beliefs or misunderstandings, and to discuss the implications of this knowledge base for early childhood policy, practice, professional development, and research,"³ the authors have provided an authoritative map of the field as it stands today, laying to rest many questions that no longer need to be debated.

What the Neurons to Neighborhoods Research Tells Us

Neurons to Neighborhoods lays out in detail the science of early human development, including how the young brain develops, how young children learn to regulate their responses to the



"For so long, we have really grappled with the question of what difference does the environment make vs. what difference does the child make. But now we know that it's both. *Neurons to Neighborhoods* places the child front and center. The responsibility is on ALL adults who interact with him."

—Yolanda Garcia, member of the National Research Council's Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development, Director, Children's Services Department, Santa Clara County Office of Education, and former Santa Clara Children and Families Commissioner

“Thirty years ago, it was considered absurd to suggest that infants have memories, that they can experience a sense of loss, that they explore cause-and-effect sequences, or that they can engage in numerical reasoning. Today it is known that they have these and many other sophisticated mental capacities.”

—*Neurons to Neighborhoods*

world, how they form relationships and begin to communicate and learn, the processes involved in making friends and getting along with peers, and the myriad ways in which young children are affected by family, culture and neighborhood environments. Through an exhaustive process of examination and review across research studies and across disciplines, the authors have brought forward the following critical findings and themes that provide a framework for our policy and practice in California.

The early years count. The science of *Neurons to Neighborhoods* as a whole underscores the enormous importance of the early years in setting a sturdy or fragile foundation for later life. At the same time, there is little evidence for rigid “critical periods” during which development must take place, or that special stimulation beyond normal growth experiences leads to advanced brain development. While the infant and toddler years are pivotal, healthy development begins before birth and continues beyond age 3, throughout childhood.

The “nature vs. nurture” debate is now irrelevant. Rather, it is “nature through nurture.” Both are important; neither stands by itself. How a child’s genetic endowment is expressed will depend on the shaping effects and opportunities of the environment and nurture she experiences. At the same time, a child’s inborn attributes will tend to influence how parents and caregivers respond to her.

Young children’s relationships are central. Because children have a fundamental developmental need to form positive relationships with their parents or caregivers and to feel safe, healthy early development depends on nurturing and dependable relationships. Cognitive, language, and social and emotional development cannot be separated from each other. Especially for school readiness, how young children feel is as important as how they think.

Children are deeply affected by their emotional and physical environment.

Because young children are so dependent on relationships, they are deeply affected by their parents’ or caregivers’ problems. Children exposed to violence or who live with parents with substance abuse or untreated mental health problems experience stress that negatively affects brain development. Physical environmental factors including poor nutrition, infections, environmental toxins, and drug exposure also produce negative effects.

Culture influences all aspects of development.

A child’s cognitive and language abilities and well-being “are linked to his or her everyday experiences, which are embedded in the cultural practices or ‘scripts’ of his or her family and society.”⁴ While the effects of culture on development need further study, it is clear that varying cultural practices lead to different developmental outcomes, which may be valued

differently by diverse cultural groups. Parents’ and caregivers’ child-rearing beliefs and practices are especially significant.

Poverty in early childhood creates great risks.

Young children’s development is strongly linked to their social and economic status. While poverty alone is not necessarily detrimental, children growing up in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty experience the greatest risks, both for early weaknesses in communication and learning and for later educational and economic failure. Poverty in infancy and early childhood may be even more damaging than at later ages.

It is possible to make a difference.

Because children are highly malleable in the earliest years, there is more opportunity for positive influence during this period than was previously thought: “The overarching question of whether we can intervene successfully in young children’s lives has been answered in the affirmative and should be put to rest. However, interventions that work are rarely simple, inexpensive, or easy to implement.”⁵

continued on page 4



The Implications for School Readiness in California

By throwing a bright light on the multidimensional and interdependent nature of development and by drawing lessons from what works, the science of



Neurons to Neighborhoods challenges us to be more rigorous in assessing the appropriateness of our programs and policies for young children—to ask hard questions about whether our actions make sense in light of what we know now. This is especially urgent if we are to be effective in helping the many young children in California who need extra support in order to succeed in school.

Today, too many of our youngest Californians are living in conditions known to place them at extra risk. Twenty-seven percent of all young children in the state live in families with incomes below the poverty line, while more than half live in families with low incomes. One mother in three with a young child lacks a high school diploma.⁶ Of children under the age of 5, 63,000 have disabilities, often because of smoking or substance abuse by the mother during pregnancy.⁷ Many of California's children who are in child care do not receive the nurturing care that they need, and many are in settings where no standards are in place. And sharp disparities and inequities exist among children along all these dimensions according to their ethnicity and other socioeconomic factors.

Need to increase level of investment to reduce disparities.

If we evaluate our current investments and

policies against these needs, it is clear we need to do more to bring our priorities fully into line with what we know about the importance of this period of life. Even taking into account the resources available through Prop. 10, young children and their families are still under-supported. In

education alone, spending on children over the age of 5 exceeds that for younger children by about 20 to one. As CCFC Executive Director Jane Henderson notes, “Most brain development takes place in the first years of life, but most resources are invested in later years. We need to see early childhood education on a par with K-12 education

in importance and support it accordingly.”

Support young children's social, emotional and mental health needs.

In addition to increasing the overall scale of our investments, California partners in Prop. 10, including parents, policymakers, educators, child advocates, businesses and communities need to make informed and strategic choices about where to focus our resources for school readiness. Within the current direction of our work, the *Neurons to Neighborhoods* science makes it clear we need to do more to recognize and support the importance of relationships at the center of young children's lives. Parental and caregiver warmth at home and in child care is a predictor of children's school success, as are the relationship qualities of their kindergarten teachers. Training for early elementary teachers, as well as child care providers, to help them understand young children's developmental needs is also

important. For those young children who are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health problems, and for their parents, therapeutic resources are essential.



Implement policies to reduce family poverty and support family leave.

Because poverty is closely and negatively correlated with so many important aspects of child development, bold

approaches to provide more support may be needed. *Neurons to Neighborhoods* recommends that tax, wage, and income support policies be modified to ensure that no young child suffers from deep and persistent poverty, regardless of his or her parents' work status. To the extent possible, the trade-off between work and parenting should be eased. *Neurons to Neighborhoods* recommends expanding family and medical leave to cover all parents, with mechanisms to protect against the loss of income.

Improve the quality and cultural appropriateness of child care.

For the many young children whose working poor parents cannot afford to care for them full-time, major investments in compensation and professional development for early childhood educators are needed to make sure that child care offers these children the kinds of exploration and experiences that will help them get ready for school. Such high quality care is all the more important for poor children; but in one

“The time is long overdue for society to recognize the significance of out-of-home relationships for young children, to esteem those who care for them when their parents are not available, and to compensate them adequately as a means of supporting stability and quality in these relationships for all children...”

—Neurons to Neighborhoods

major national study, less than 20 percent of care for infants and toddlers was found to meet quality standards.⁸ In addition, long-standing traditional early childhood education programs need to find new ways to accommodate the increasing cultural diversity of California's growing population of young children and the economic and social realities of current family life. Effective early childhood programs must

be affordable, culturally appropriate, and accommodating to parents' work schedules. Services offered to families should be individualized and accessible in the community, offering integrated strategies to help families with multiple needs.

Work to bring the whole field of practice in line with research. *Neurons to Neighborhoods* has already helped to bring a nuanced scientific understanding to partners' work on behalf of young children around the state. Earlier this year several County Children and Families Commissions in the Central Valley joined together to sponsor a full-day session on the contents of the book. In December, in conjunction with ZERO to THREE's National Training Institute in San Diego, County Commissions participated in a one-day intensive forum led by *Neurons to Neighborhoods* authors. But its important findings need to be more widely disseminated and more deeply internalized in practice, not only in the child development arena but in other areas of policy and practice that have a powerful influence on young children's lives, such as welfare reform, economic intervention, and community development. And there remain unanswered questions for further research, as well as needed improvements in our approach to program evaluation.

Building on the strong foundation that *Neurons to Neighborhoods* provides, the

California Children and Families Commission will support additional research to help answer yet-unresolved questions identified by scientists and by California practitioners looking to gauge the effectiveness of their work. CCFC hopes to promote a research-based climate in which rigorous evaluations allow programs sufficient time to mature before results are measured, and where negative findings, rather than creating a loss of support for early childhood programs in general, instead are regarded as a stimulus for further experimentation. In this way we can continue to ensure that our work for young children advances on a firm scientific basis, providing them with the help they most need for young children to reach their full potential in school and in life. ■

1 Barnett, W.S. (1996). *Lives in the balance: Age-27 benefit-cost analysis of High/Scope Perry Preschool Program* (Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 11). Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

2 National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. (2000). From *Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Committee on Integrating the Science of Early Childhood Development. Jack P. Shonkoff and Deborah A. Phillips, eds. Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

3 *Neurons to Neighborhoods*, p.3.

4 *Neurons to Neighborhoods*, p.68.

5 *Neurons to Neighborhoods*, p.10.

6 Public Policy Institute of California. (2001). *California's Young Children: Demographic, Social and Economic Conditions*. San Francisco, California. Presented at Oct. 18, 2001, State Commission Meeting.

7 Carr, A., M.S., Hanson, M.J., Ph.D. (2001). *Positive Outcomes for Children with Disabilities and Other Special Needs: Preliminary Analysis*. Rohnert Park, CA: Institute on Human Services.

8 *Neurons to Neighborhoods*, p. 320.

On January 7, Education Week released *Quality Counts 2002: Building Blocks for Success*, which examines what states are doing to provide early learning experiences for young children; ensure that those experiences are of high quality; prepare and pay early childhood educators adequately; and measure the results of early childhood programs. The report also examines states' commitment to kindergarten, the transition point into the formal public education system. For the first time, *Education Week* used this annual report to focus on the early years and the link between the quality of early education programs and future academic success.

The report includes a "State of the States" assessment that reviews more than 80 indicators of the health of states' public education systems, which includes an overview of Proposition 10 and highlights CCFC's School Readiness Initiative. Please visit www.edweek.org to purchase the report, view the full report online, read the executive summary or review other state report cards.

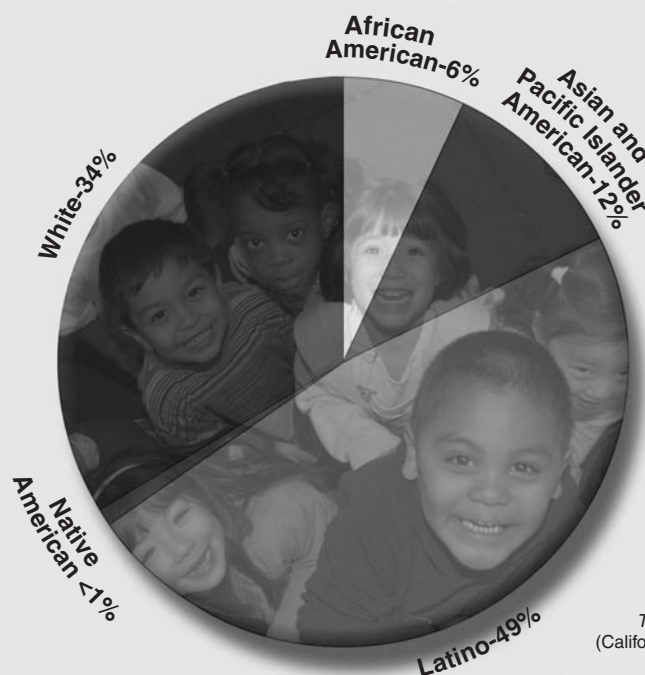
This publication can be ordered from the National Academy Press. Call (800) 624-6242 or purchase online at www.nap.edu

California Snapshot

More than half a million children are born every year in California, and approximately two-thirds of these births are non-White.

352,961 non-White children in 2000 (California Department of Finance, August 2001)

Ethnic breakdown of California children birth to 4 years old



There are nearly 2.8 million children under age 5 in California.

Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding (California Department of Health Services, 2000)

New Public Education Campaign for Parents and Caregivers Launched Statewide

Which Media for Which Groups?

Which Media for Which Groups? Research indicated that the unique Asian Pacific Islander American community has a strong preference for receiving messages in their own language. As a result, spots and other public education materials were produced in Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Hmong and Lao, Korean, Cambodian and Thai. Because there are limited media outlets in these languages, outreach strategies were customized for each population. For example, the small number of hours of television programming in Thai, Cambodian and Tagalog (in some cases, just a couple of hours each day) meant that television spots might not be the best way to reach these groups. In these cases, a decision was made to focus on print media such as newspapers. For the Hmong and Lao communities, however, radio spots were the most effective method of communicating parent/caregiver messages to this group. In the case of the Filipino audience, it was noted that although Filipinos represent the second largest APIA population segment in California, a good portion of this segment could be reached through general market media because of its high level of English literacy.

When creating the framework for the California Children and Families Commission (CCFC), the authors of Prop. 10 emphasized the importance of communicating emerging information about early childhood development to the general public. They recognized that in a state as large and diverse as California, the media could effectively convey critical messages about the importance of the early years and the central role of parents and caregivers in child development. To that end, 6 percent of Prop. 10 funds were dedicated to public education.

Over the past two years, the CCFC has developed a comprehensive and multi-tiered public education campaign that is comprised of outreach at the community level, a multilingual media campaign and the *Kit for New Parents*, a comprehensive resource for the parents of every child born in California. In an effort to reach as many California parents and caregivers as possible with messages and information about the early years, CCFC's outreach program will be customized to reach parents in their own language and in their neighborhood or community through trusted local organizations. The result is a unified public education campaign in which each program reinforces the others and utilizes the most effective communication channels for conveying valuable information about how to be more effective parents.

Multilingual Media Campaign

Recognizing the value of public education as a way to help effect positive change in parenting and caregiving behaviors, the CCFC has launched a public education effort that includes a media campaign. The CCFC utilized extensive qualitative and quantitative research to review and test its preliminary messages garnered from focus groups and surveys of California parents of diverse income levels and ethnic-

ities in crafting its media campaigns. Overwhelmingly, parents and caregivers participating in the research responded well to the messages that reminded and encouraged them to adapt their behavior to include more time reading, playing and interacting with their young children. However, the research also revealed that not all parents and caregivers were aware that children benefit from reading, talking and playing very early in their first year.

The resulting CCFC campaign, which supports the vision of school readiness, utilizes mul-

iple language versions of print, television and radio advertisements and billboards to let parents and caregivers know, "Your Choices Shape Their Chances." Parents are not only reminded to take time out of their busy schedules to interact with their children, but through modeling, are shown simple actions that help to prepare young children for school and for life. For example, in one TV spot a father playfully folds laundry with his daughter, turning an everyday activity into a learning moment that helps his child develop the social, emotional, cognitive and physical skills she will need to be ready for school.

The campaign aims to persuade parents that their efforts can make an impact and spur them to make simple changes in their everyday interactions with their young children. Recent scientific findings about childhood brain development are cited to support and lend weight to the importance of quality interactions with young children. Each TV and radio spot ends by directing parents to the CCFC's toll-free number, (800) KIDS-025 for further information.

A separate element of the campaign focuses on the dangers to the developing fetus when pregnant women smoke and cites studies showing that babies exposed to smoke during pregnancy are more likely to be born premature and have serious health problems and learning disabilities. Viewers and listeners are invited to call the toll-free number, (800) KIDS-025, which will connect callers to a smoking cessation hotline. CCFC funds support expanded hotline services to include counseling specifically for pregnant smokers who want help quitting.

Community-Based Organization Grant Program

Recognizing that not all of California's diverse parents and caregivers may be reached through CCFC's extensive television, radio, print and outdoor media campaign, the Commission recently launched the Community-Based Organization (CBO) Grant Program. This component of CCFC's public education effort draws upon the ability of CBOs to conduct local outreach to audiences missed by traditional media outreach efforts (those who rely on sources other than the media for their information or do not have access to media in their native language). At the local level, CBOs are credible sources that families know and trust. CBOs will work with State and County Children and Families Commissions to raise awareness about what parents and caregivers can do to ensure their children are healthy, learning and ready to reach their greatest potential in school and in life. The effort will target programs that will provide outreach to parents and caregivers in a "hands-on" and culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate manner.

While delivering overall messages about the importance of reading, talking and playing with children and the negative effects of drug, tobacco and alcohol use during pregnancy and of second hand smoke on pregnant women and young children, the CBO program helps County Commissions link audiences to local resources, where available. The program is being implemented through 10 regions throughout the state, grouped by geographic and population factors. Each of these 10 groups has identified regional priorities, in addition to providing information to parents about child development. Regional priorities might include providing



CCFC Chair Rob Reiner, accompanied by Andy Garcia and Jamie Lee Curtis, reads to children at Hope Street Family Resource Center during an unprecedented parent education launch in Los Angeles on Nov. 1, 2001.

information and resources to parents about the importance of breastfeeding, child safety, oral health, prenatal care or helping parents access needed services, such as mental health or substance abuse prevention and treatment programs. These regional priorities, as well as the outreach strategies, will be tailored to the needs of individual communities.

The Sacramento and Bay Area regions began implementation of their programs in January. The remaining eight regions are expected to begin implementation in March. More information on the program can be found at www.ccfc.ca.gov/rfp.htm.

Comprehensive Parenting Resource for All Parents of Newborns

The third element of the Public Education Program is the *Kit for New Parents*. The *Kit* is a comprehensive resource that takes the messages conveyed in the CBO program and media campaign to the next level by putting tools for effective parenting into the hands of new and expectant parents. State and County Children and Families Commissions are partnering to distribute the *Kit* by enlisting local providers who work with new and expectant parents to deliver the *Kits*. The *Kit*, described in the Summer 2001 issue of *Building Blocks*, is available free in both English and Spanish versions to every

new and expectant parent in California. It consists of:

- Six parenting videos
- A series of supplementary parenting brochures
- A *Parents Guide* produced by the University of California, Berkeley that is designed to be used in conjunction with the local phone book to link parents to resources and services in their communities
- A baby book so parents can begin reading to their child right away

"This is a program that can help mothers become the very best parents and give their babies the best start in life," said a public health nurse interviewed as part of the program's pilot study conducted by the Center for Community Wellness of the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley. Parents can receive their free *Kits* from health care providers, hospitals and parenting classes that partner with the CCFC County Commissions to become *Kit* providers. In addition, parents may call CCFC's toll-free number, (800) KIDS-025, to receive a free *Kit*.

Organizations that would like to partner with CCFC County Commissions should contact their local County Commission. For a list of County Commissions, please consult our Web site, www.ccfc.ca.gov. ■

Child Care Retention Programs Tackle Compensation to Spur Growth in the Field

It is a problem all too familiar to many families: finding quality child care. While the demand for child care has risen as more and more mothers enter the workforce, quality child care programs remain hard to find. Recent studies have found that only one in seven child development centers offers the quality of programming known to effectively promote healthy development and learning, largely because salaries are so low that it is difficult to keep trained teachers on staff. The problem has been exacerbated in California by an increased demand for elementary school teachers as class sizes have decreased and emergency credentialing has enabled many early child care educators to transition into the higher-paying public education system. As a result, child care centers experience a staff turnover rate of 30 to 40 percent a year, which can significantly undermine the quality of care that young children receive. Though early childhood educators who teach and care for young children have a greater influence on their developing readiness for school than anyone else outside the family, 70 percent of providers earn poverty-level wages.

States are increasingly recognizing the relationship between stability among professionals in the early child care and education field and the availability of quality early childhood education. Clearly, this relationship impacts children's readiness for school. According to a February 2001 analysis by the Urban Institute, California is among only 13 states in the U.S. implementing programs that aim to increase the availability of quality child care and preschool programs by improving wages and benefits.

Meeting the Needs of California

An important piece of California's efforts to improve compensation for early childhood educators is a three-year project of the California Children and Families Commission developed in collabora-

tion with the Child Development Division of the California Department of Education and County Children and Families Commissions. The Matching Funds for Retention Incentives for Early Care and Education Providers project invites each County Commission to devise ways of improving retention by providing incentives for early childhood educators, offering them stipends, respite time, benefit packages and bonuses. Such programs increase salaries and/or benefits for committed professionals without shifting the burden of these additional costs to families. Funds from State and County Commissions and other local

investments totaling \$75 million are dedicated to retention incentive programs for providers throughout the state. The State Commission estimates the program could reach more than 20,000 early childhood educators.

Participating County Commissions have devised many promising strategies to help develop the careers and bolster the salaries

of their local early care and education professionals. While individual approaches may vary from county to county, most programs offer wage supplements—with predetermined requirements—based upon the provider's education, background and their ability to speak multiple languages.

Stipends increase as providers pursue additional education or other professional development opportunities.

Incentives for Care Givers

In San Luis Obispo County, Project REWARD (Retaining Experienced Workers and Reinforcing Development) offers stipends to professionals working in

both center-based child care facilities and family care homes. Stipends are determined based upon the number of early childhood education (ECE) units and/or non-unit professional development training the provider has completed. Stipends



range from \$150 to \$4,000. In the first year of its three-year program, the Children and Families Commission of San Luis Obispo County has invested \$375,000 in Project REWARD. In years two and three of the program, they expect to increase the investment to \$450,000 annually. To ensure maximum flexibility, the funds can be used for anything that supports the professional development of the provider or can be invested back into licensed home-based child care programs. Since the program's inception, Project REWARD has awarded stipends to 159 early childhood educators throughout the county.

Though the program has been very well received, executive director Susan Hughes offered lessons learned. According to Hughes, "It has been more difficult than we expected to recruit family care providers for Project REWARD. Moving forward, we have taken steps to make the program more accessible by decreasing the requisite non-unit training for program participation and increasing our outreach to the family care community." Hughes hopes to see family care provider participation increase significantly in years two and three of the program.

Centers offering higher pay reported lower turnover, and that children in these settings spent more time engaged in social activities...less time wandering aimlessly around the classroom and had more advanced language skills than did children with centers with higher turnover.

—Center for Childcare Workforce, 2000

continued on page 10

Key Study Confirms Lasting Benefits from Early Childhood Education and Extended School Support

A groundbreaking study of the Chicago Child-Parent Center (CPC) Program, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* earlier this year, provides a valuable complement to the findings of *Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*, highlighted in our article on p. 2. While *Neurons to Neighborhoods* offers an integrated understanding of how young children develop and what they need in order to thrive, the CPC study confirms for the first time that well-designed, comprehensive, long-term interventions based on that understanding can make an important and lasting difference for the children who participate in them, even when delivered on a large scale through public institutions.

A number of studies have shown that preschool participation has positive long-term effects on school performance, but most earlier research has looked at small-scale model programs operating under closely controlled conditions. Few studies have investigated programs in settings of concentrated inner-city poverty, and there has been little exploration of the effects of children's length of participation. In the CPC study, researchers established that children living in the poorest neighborhoods of Chicago continued to benefit up until the age of 20 from their participation in a large-scale public school program that offered them preschool and extended intervention through the third grade, including ongoing parental involvement, comprehensive services and family support, smaller class size, and a variety of instructional enrichments. The researchers specifically investigated whether and how children's length of participation in the program affected outcomes.

The study entailed a 15-year follow-up of two groups of low-income, mostly African-American children born in 1980 (1,539 children in all). The first group consisted of 989 children who participated in the CPC Program. The Child-Parent Centers, established in the Chicago public schools in 1967, are funded by Title I of the federal Improving America's Schools Act (formerly the Elementary and Secondary Education Act), which provides grants to school districts serving high concentrations of low-income children for a broad range of services and enrichment programs.

The program serves children ages 3 to 9 and their families in 24 elementary

schools. Key components include extensive outreach, including home visits; comprehensive support services for children and their families, including health and nutrition services; a multi-faceted parent involvement and parent education program, including high school completion; low teacher-child ratios in preschool and kindergarten; and reduced class size and extensive instructional enrichment in grades one to three. The program as a whole emphasizes acquisition of language and math skills through structured but diverse learning experiences.

The 550 children in the second (control) group attended regular full-day kindergarten programs. About one-quarter of the children in this group (23 percent) had also been enrolled in Head Start, but none received the ongoing services of the CPC Program. The children were matched with the CPC children by age of kindergarten entry, eligibility for government programs, and neighborhood and family poverty.

For the two groups, the study measured and compared rates of high school completion and school dropout by age 20, juvenile arrests for violent and non-violent offenses, and grade retention and special education placement by age 18. For the children in the CPC Program, the researchers further analyzed the results by children's length of involvement in the program, differentiating between children who had participated in the preschool intervention only, those who participated in the school-age intervention only (at least one year of involvement from first to third grade), and those who participated in both (extended intervention, lasting from four to six years).

Relative to children in the non-CPC comparison group, researchers found that children in the CPC Program had significantly higher educational attainment and were less likely to be involved in crime. At age 20, children who had participated in the preschool intervention for one or two years

were significantly more likely to have completed high school (49.7 percent vs. 38.5 percent), had completed more years of education (10.6 years vs. 10.2 years), and had lower rates of juvenile arrest (16.9 percent vs. 25.1 percent) than the children in the control group. Boys who participated in preschool showed an additional improvement in dropout rates beyond that found for girls. Children who participated either in preschool

or in the school-age program were less likely to have been retained a grade or to have received special education services. Importantly, children who had been in the program the longest, from preschool through second or third grade, had the lowest rates of remediation and the highest levels of performance across outcomes.

The CPC study researchers conclude, "As preventive interventions, the Chicago CPCs and others like them have advantages

over other programs. They generally provide greater levels of intensity, longer durations, and comprehensive services. These attributes make it more likely that child outcomes will be improved....Given that the annual cost to society of school dropout and crime is estimated at \$350 billion [nationally], study findings suggest that the benefits to society of program participation can exceed costs."

By confirming the value of comprehensive, extended support for young children, the CPC study provides important research support for California's new School Readiness Initiative, a similar effort through Prop. 10 in which many of California's lowest-performing schools will work with local community partners and families to build a continuum of support for children and their families from birth through preschool and into the early grades. The study makes clear that large-scale public efforts like these are a good long-term investment in our young people's future, fostering both better lives and fiscal savings. ■

In the CPC study, children living in the poorest neighborhoods of Chicago continued to benefit up until the age of 20 from their participation in a large-scale public school program that offered them preschool and extended intervention.

The Professional Development Program (PDP), a partnership between the Contra Costa Children and Families Commission and the Contra Costa County Office of Education, has been implemented in a similar manner but incorporates some of the unique characteristics of the county, such as a relatively well-educated workforce and geographic diversity that includes urban, suburban and rural areas. In Contra Costa, there are approximately 5,500 early care and education providers employed in child care centers, preschools and family care settings. PDP will be able to serve over one-third of the professionals in the county through this commitment of nearly \$8 million in local and state funds. Incentives for professional development—up to \$2,000—are available to early childhood education professionals working in licensed centers, homes and preschools. In addition, providers with college or graduate degrees are eligible for an additional incentive (up to \$3,500 total) to reward and encourage a higher level of education.

The Contra Costa program emphasizes multilingual and multicultural outreach. To ensure maximum reach, the program has stationed full-time professional development advisors in three different areas of the county to let providers know about the availability and benefits of participating in the program, as well as offer help with the application process, professional development plans or finding the right classes. The professional development advisors also focus on enrolling family child care providers in the program. In addition, PDP includes a mentoring component to assist applicants who are pursuing continued education.

“If this program encourages talented professionals to stay with their employer for a longer period of time, it is a win-win for everybody. The child care environment is much more beneficial for young children if they develop bonds with consistent providers. In the last year, one center has seen four providers come and go, and ultimately the children suffer,” said PDP program director Kathi Linquist.

The Educator Support Program (ESP) developed by the Nevada County Children and Families First Commission offers a combination of incentives, including cash stipends and \$150 per month to be used towards a personalized combination of health benefits, annuity contributions, life insurance and/or liability insurance. “In a small rural county like Nevada, the child care profession faces the same training

and retention barriers as other counties in California, but they are exacerbated by weather, isolation and an extreme economic gap between wealthy retirees and young, working families,” according to program director Liz Matson. To address some of these needs in the county, providers who care for special needs children, Native American children or infants, work in a low-capacity area, or use a second language are given weighted consideration for participation in this small program, which can only serve 80 enrollees.

For individuals who are new to the field, ESP offers “Future Educators” cash stipends and reimbursement for books and tuition in the first year of participation in the program and benefits in the second year. For “Experienced Educators,” up to \$1,000 in cash stipends and benefits are available to enrollees. In addition, supplementary stipends are available to individuals who use a second language when working with children or their parents, as well as for program enrollees who may need extra help paying for their own child care.

ESP participants are paired with a Professional Development Advisor to create a two-year Professional Development Plan, culminating in a portfolio that reflects their accomplishments and qualifications. Each individual must also spend at least 18 hours in training that focuses on diversity and cultural sensitivity.

Looking Forward

The programs described above represent three of the forty-two County Commissions participating in the statewide initiative. Ultimately, some of these compensation-based retention strategies will prove more successful than others. The California Children and Families Commission will conduct an evaluation to find out what works best. The State Commission will begin to share information on promising practices at the conclusion of this three-year program, encouraging the long-term development of retention strategies funded by both Prop. 10 and other sources. As much of the research over the last several years suggests, higher paid and better trained early childhood educators will positively impact the quality of care that is available and ultimately children’s readiness for school. In addition, these projects will provide models for replication both statewide and throughout the U.S. as interest in these innovative strategies continues to grow. ■

Nationally, California ranks near the bottom among the states in student performance. The authors of *Neurons to Neighborhoods* suggest a priority should be to reduce disparities and disadvantages that leave some children ill-prepared for learning.

A growing body of research demonstrates that quality early childhood and education programs can enhance children’s social, emotional, physical and cognitive development and directly impact their success in school. In a seminal paper released last year of the Chicago Child-Parent Center Program, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, researchers reported on several thousand children (the largest study of its kind to date) who attended enriched publicly-funded preschool programs and then entered elementary schools that continued to provide support services to these children and their families. After following up with these children 15 years later, the researchers found that this quality early childhood intervention resulted in improved educational achievement, reductions in juvenile arrests and reduced prevalence of substance abuse. These findings add to other scientific data demonstrating that public spending on early childhood education programs makes economic sense and provide substantial social benefit.

Though there is so much need in California, it is important to concentrate our resources in areas where we can have the most impact. To that end, the State Commission has fast-tracked a School Readiness Initiative that partners with County Children and Families Commissions to invest \$400 million over four years in school readiness programs. These programs will first be developed in neighborhoods with low performing schools where kids are more likely to face issues that can lead to difficulties in school. The initiative will build on existing programs by filling gaps, coordinating services and instituting quality improvements in areas such as early care and education, health and social services and parent involvement and will rely on the communities themselves to identify needs and priorities.

The needs of young children are vast and can only be successfully addressed in partnership with parents, policymakers, educators, child advocates, businesses and communities. The science points to what works, and our combined efforts to increase investment in our youngest children will make a difference. In this issue of *Building Blocks* we discuss how the State Commission, County Children and Families Commissions and others are addressing the challenges facing California’s children, ages 0 to 5, and their families.



Rob Reiner
Chair, California Children and Families Commission

Prop. 10 - Facts at a Glance

What is Prop. 10?

In November 1998, voters passed the California Children and Families Act, an initiative that added a 50 cent-per-pack tax on cigarettes to fund education, health, child care and other programs to promote early childhood development, from prenatal to age 5. Prop. 10 was designed to address the lack of public funding and support for early childhood development in the wake of a growing body of scientific evidence indicating the emotional, physical, social and developmental environment to which children are exposed has a profound impact on their ability to reach their greatest potential in school and in life.

How does it work?

Children and Families Commissions at the state level and in each of California's 58 counties are carrying out the work of the initiative.

The California Children and Families Commission (CCFC) is the leadership agency and statewide coordinator for the California Children and Families Act. The CCFC provides oversight, training and assistance to the County Commissions and statewide education on the importance of early childhood development. In addition, 20 percent of the overall revenue is administered by the CCFC to offer technical assistance to County Commissions, to conduct research and evaluation on the best policies and practices for young children and to develop education, infrastructure and training programs for parents, child care providers and other professionals.

The bulk of the Prop. 10 funds, 80 percent, go directly to the County Commissions. The County Commissions must develop

strategic plans consistent with CCFC guidelines on funding local child development programs and services but they also have maximum flexibility in tailoring funding and programs to local needs. Some CCFC requirements for County Commissions include obtaining broad public input and submitting audits on spending to the CCFC.

Prop. 10 mandates that each Commission form at least one advisory committee to provide expertise and support. The State Commission has established an Advisory Committee on Diversity, charged with helping to ensure that statewide Prop. 10 programs meet the needs of California's ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse population and children with special needs and disabilities.

How are Commissioners chosen?

The CCFC's member commission is comprised of seven members appointed by the Governor, the Speaker of the Assembly and the Senate Rules Committee. The Secretary for Education and the Secretary of the Health and Human Services Agency (or their designees) also serve as ex-officio members. Each county Board of Supervisors appoints a five to nine member Commission to include a member of the board of supervisors and two members from among those who manage county functions (e.g., health or behavioral health services, social services, or tobacco prevention and treatment services). The remaining members can be drawn from county functions or organizations that work in the early childhood development arena (e.g., child care resource and referral agencies, community-based organizations, school districts and medical, pediatric, or obstetric associations). ■

CALIFORNIA CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSIONERS

S. Kimberly Belshè, a program director at the James Irvine Foundation and the former director of the California Department of Health Services, brings to the Commission an extensive knowledge of California's health programs.

Elizabeth Rice Grossman is a retired investment professional who brings a commitment to philanthropy and children's issues to the Commission. She currently serves as a member of the Juvenile Probation Commission in the City and County of San Francisco, on the Board of Directors for The Omega Boys Club and manages two charitable foundations with her family.

Sandra Gutierrez, an expert in the development of child care services, is currently the California project director for Child Care Programs at The Enterprise Foundation. Previously, she served as project coordinator for the Child Care Law Project.

Karen Hill-Scott, Ed.D., is nationally known for her work in child care and development. President of her own children's television consulting firm, she is also a co-founder and board member of Crystal Stairs, Inc., and an adjunct professor of planning at UCLA.

Rob Reiner, a filmmaker and activist for infants and young children, serves as the chair of the Commission after devoting substantial time and resources to the passage of Proposition 10 as part of his crusade to shift the national consciousness to value early childhood development.

Louis A. Vismara, M.D. is a founding member of the M.I.N.D. Institute at the University of California, Davis. The interdisciplinary organization brings together researchers, clinicians, educators, parents and children to investigate and provide resources for a wide range of neurodevelopment disorders, from autism to learning disabilities. He also serves as a consultant to State Senator John Burton.

Ex Officio Members:

Grantland Johnson, as Governor Davis' Secretary of Health and Human Services, has appointed Undersecretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, Glen Rosselli, to serve on the Commission in his place. Prior to joining the agency, Mr. Rosselli worked in the Federal Government serving as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy Analysis in the Treasury Department and senior advisor to Secretary Rubin.

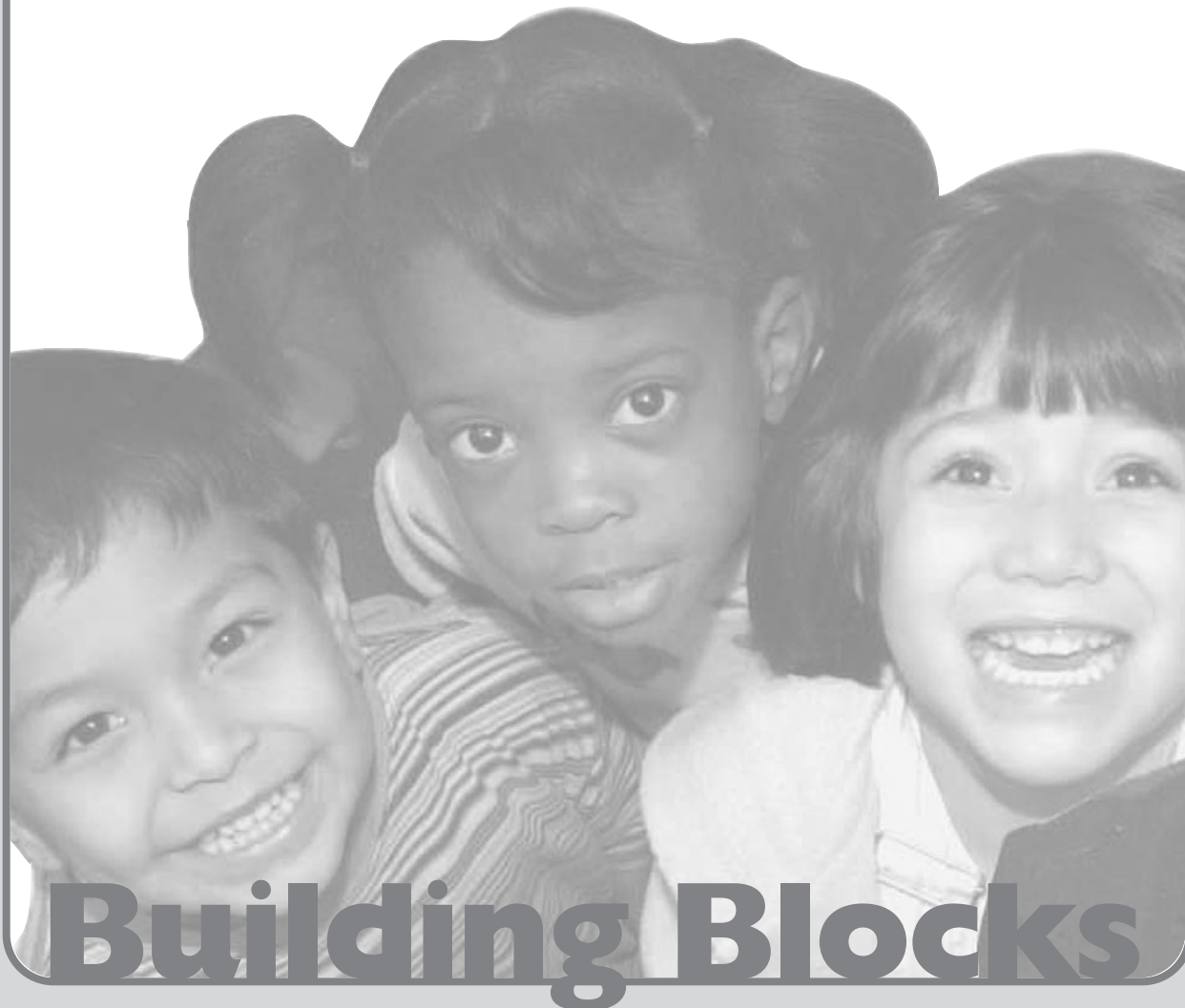
Kerry Mazzoni, as Governor Davis' Secretary for Education, has appointed Assistant Secretary for Education, Theresa Garcia, to serve on the Commission in her place. Ms. Garcia brings a strong background in education issues and policy and program analysis to her post. She currently directs the Office's broad range of policy activities related to early childhood and K-12 education.

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Building Blocks

Building Blocks is a publication of the California Children and Families Commission.

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